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CASSANDRA: AND OTHER POEMS.

CASSANDRA:

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

R. WHIELDON BADDELEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE SQUIRE OF CHAPEL DARESFIELD," ETC.

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IN the poem "CASSANDRA" the author has not thought it necessary to pay strict regard to any of the contradictory legends which affect his characters.

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"With lips too happy for laughter" 141

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CASSANDRA.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

CASSANDRA.

ŒNONE.

PRIAM.

PARIS.

CORÆBUS.

A Grecian Soldier.

CHORUS *of Trojan Women.*

SCENE—*Troy and Mount Ida.*

TIME—*First just before, and then during and just after, the Siege of Troy.*

CASSANDRA.

ACT I. SCENE I.

CASSANDRA.

O BEAUTEOUS hour of eve! sweeter
to me
Than e'er thou art to tired ox or hind!
O intense, calm, tumult-appeasing soul
Of purple-skirted twilight, into mine
Infused, and bringing to me sadness, or
Its unsubstantial shadow, till my eyes
Know tears more sweet than smiles, and gentle as
The dew which is as Heaven now wept for earth;

For Ares has made earth red as the set
Of sun, or yon Sigeum's marble cliffs,
While, as the storm from where the halcyons fly,
He keeps aloof from happy Ilion.

How, piercing through yon cushions of rose-
cloud,
Gleams yonder star-point! so, I think, my soul
Is brilliant above pleasures which it loves;
And as Polyxena is a fair flower
Of earth, of the paler kind,—as, for compare,
Œnone brings to mind the buoyant breeze
Happy to murmur under a blue sky,
As she to sing her heart's abundance 'neath
The heaven of Paris's love; so—for in me
Is something not of earth, yet loving earth—
I am as yonder colour-cinctured star.

How weary of earth and earth's must he have
been,

The hero doom'd to labours vain as vast;
Or he, the greater Titan, whose proud lip
Æons of agony on Caucasus
Might blanch, but could not writhe: upon *my* lips
Are only smiles, and in my soul delight;
And palace and not prison to me is earth,
Vivid with light, and passionate with life;
From where, majestic, the great mountain soars,
Like its own eagles, almost to the sun,
To where the rivulet chafes around a stone,
And centuries may make loud cities dumb,
But still that rivulet chafes around the stone:
Yes; ever with me is the glory of
The soaring mountain and the rushing stream,
The restlessness of clouds that know all hues,
The rest of arching heaven that knows but one!

Enter Paris.

Paris! Œnone but this afternoon
Show'd us your sail.

PARIS.

Its yard you surely mean,
The sail is not yet spread.

CASS.

You made her think
It was.

PARIS.

Because I wish'd her so to think.
Howe'er, my anchor will I weigh to-night,
So balmy is the breeze, so bright the stars!

CASS.

Paris! she loves you, and you have loved her;
Constant is she, you false as she is fair.

PARIS.

She is fair and sweet, and constant to herself.

CASS.

What mean you, Paris? constant to herself?

PARIS.

Why, if a man acquires a bag of gold,
Deserves he more by keeping it, than if
He spend and have it gone? Nay, in men's
mouths
The spendthrift better than the miser fares:
So, for this constancy in love, it means
That, having found what one desires, one grieves
To lose it; merit there is none in this
As I think.

CASS.

You think basely, stupidly.

PARIS.

Look you, Cassandra, as my sail will flap
To separate us soon, I now transfer
To you what others' generosity
Has made me somewhat affluent in—advice:
You are my favourite sister.

CASS.

Rather say
The sole one of your sisters you endure.

PARIS.

Because I bear a brain, and so do you;
Because I am like you in spirit, or was once;
We are wingèd creatures, you and I; not like
The dull ants round us, who so busily course
With burdens up and down this ant-hill earth.

CASS.

But I love human kind, and have no scorn;
The ant is honourable in his place,
And usefuller than is the butterfly,
Who lives but to be weary of the flowers.
There's not in all the cities of the world
The poorest household that to its own mirth
And its own mourning were more quick than I,
Could I but be among them and their words!

PARIS.

Should man, this worm who crawls, and stings,
and dies,
This miserable laughing-stock of gods,
Created for a jest, but playing pranks
Worse than a jest, upon earth's stage, which has
The universe for amphitheatre;—
Should man be honour'd, who for others cares
So little,—and so blindly for himself?

CASS.

There's something self-applausive in the vein
Of cynicism.

PARIS.

Something natural.

CASS.

But nothing true; the individuals
Of human kind care only for themselves,
You say; explain, then, how it comes about
That all who know her love Polyxena,

The lily, as the minstrels sing, of Troy;
She is not very wise or very fair,
Nor mirthful like Œnone, nor has wit
Like mine, that flashes pleasure, so they say;
A girl, though royal, scattereth not gifts;
Why is she loved of all, then, as she is?

PARIS.

Polyxena has a pretty face enough,
And not too pretty; then she has no foes,
For most of us hate others because all
Strive for the same ends in life's shouldering fight:
Polyxena wants nothing, does not strive,
Is always second where there are but two!
You name her lily truly, with the world
She deals as does the lily with the stream:
And much it flatters us to rule o'er those
Who, competent themselves, allow our reign.
Yes! your sweet instance should be mine, not yours.

But, look you here, Cassandra; noble and pure
You are I know, and in your presence I
Have less of Paris than I have otherwhere;
But this nobility and purity,
And this revealing of all glorious things
That shine betwixt the diamond of mid earth
And the high sun that crowns us of mid heaven,
To thine exulting and abounding youth
May seem a benison, my sister fair,
But is a curse, as was the splendid robe
Corinthian Glauce wore; nor felt, until
She had dazzled her own eyes in it an hour,
Its poison. I was once as you are now;
I, also, search'd for immortality,
And found it, and I wearied of it;—woe
To those who forestall heaven while on earth!
The love-locks which I curl and scent, and you
Laugh at, Cassandra, should be snakes to fit
The thoughts that pass behind the reveller's
brow.

CASS.

O, it was not your rising made you fall;
I think that if you loved the song, it was
Because some siren sang it.

PARIS.

In some shape
The curse will come, it matters not in what;
Prometheus suffers pain upon his rock
Not less than Sisyphus, who heaves his stone.

CASS.

Yet would I choose betwixt these pains to have one
Before the other.

PARIS.

Faith, too, so would I
Choose—to have neither. But the evening breeze
Gives life unto the waters' azure death.

Farewell, Cassandra; mind thy spinning more,
As Priam would have thee, and thy dreaming
less.
Here come my brown-faced sailors, on their lips
The freshening breeze; farewell! star after star
Pierces the purple of the summer night;
And I, right weary of the babbling tongues
Of Ilion, and of Ida's bubbling brooks,
Am eager as my sail. Swift be my speed!
As by a petrel's wing would I be drawn
To pleasures, and to fortunes, and to Greece.

SCENE II.

CASSANDRA *sings.*

O TO a length unending
Be drawn that flute-note rare,
Then to the lives we are spending
It fitly might compare.

Lives that are all of pleasure,
Which purples e'en our dreams;
O lightly goes our leisure
Beside Scamander's streams!

Day follows day, but ever
On Ilion's town divine,
Fair with the pride men sever
From quarry and from mine,
Hill-terraced o'er its river,
The suns unclouded shine!

—Shine o'er far Ida's masses,
From base to summit blue,
O'er which no cloudlet passes
To darken their deep hue.

The long Ionian summer!
The day that never ends,
For with the bright new comer
Its lingering light still blends!

Cities there be whose daughters
Lament by streams that lave
But ruins red with slaughters
And streets turn'd to a grave;
We weep not by our waters,
Nor wish them Lethe's wave.

Corœbus! join the dance.

CORŒBUS.

Ah, is it done,

Thy singing? sure his minstrelsy who made
Trees follow him, had never power like thine.

CASS.

And sure the slenderest silverest bark'd birch
That 'mid the dancing forest footed it,
Ne'er went so lightly as thy plighted bride,
Whose white hands wait thine now, whene'er the dance
Flushes the lily of that gentle face,
Unlocks the fountain of that soft brown hair,
And shows that figure—an Ionian shaft
Rises not to its volutes gracefuller;
Surely thy plighted bride, Polyxena,
Is of the fair and happy Trojan girls
The fairest?

COR. (?)

I think not.

CASS.

Join thou the dance.

COR.

And why are thy feet still?

CASS. (*smiling*).

To lighter forms
Than mine is given the dance; to me the song.

COR.

I saw a statue of Calliope
Once; she sat pensive, with her broad brow lean'd
Upon one hand, the other hung, and held
Beside her white-stoled knee the lyric quill;
Grave was her face, yet genial; less severe
Her form than stately and yet with youth in it—
Her noble beauty seem'd to me like thine.

CASS.

The girls have stopp'd their strophe; 'tis for youths
To take their hands, and move adown the dance,

With swinging at their belts of golden swords;
Go, or Polyxena will hate me,—go!

[*He goes, they dance, and all but* Corœbus *dance off.*

Cor.

Cassandra!

Cass.

Wherefore fearest thou? speak on!
What is it thou wouldst ask of me? a song?
'Tis thine;—or wouldst thou speak of graver things,
Of wisdom, virtue? though, indeed, to me
Seems nought so grave as song, which has my soul,
And from a height of heaven o'erlooks the world,
Just as the sun o'erlooks both gay and grave;
But now speak on.

Cor.

I have spoken; and cannot add,

As the tone told thee of my speech, I think,
Had I the thousand voices of the sea,
And such an eloquence as might persuade
A god against an oath he has sworn by Styx,
More than the one word of my speech conveys.

Cass. (*coldly*).

I understand thee, and I understood;
But for thine honour's sake hoped that I err'd;
And as one word for question, so one word
Suffices for an answer, and my tone
Is eloquent too, and, sternly as a girl's
Lips can, it speaks the word—Polyxena.

Cor. (*passionately*).

While still the mountain passes, that I cross'd
Before I hither from my princedom came,
Rose betwixt me and Troy, I was betrothed
Because my father will'd; thou wouldst not have
Son disobedient to his sire, a king;
Nor would I be, for fair Polyxena

Is sweet as she is fair! Nor would I be,
Save for the more than mortal charm that first
Seen here, Cassandra, made my heart its own
As Spring the earth!—Spring hath not less to strive
With earth, because her victory makes it glad.

Cass.

Deep in the abysses of the ample main,
They say, are sea-flowers, which far, far below
The restlessness, rest always, nor are torn
Up any more when the great rollers raise
Their slippery black hollows fringed with foam,
Than when the sunset streams across the sea
Unbroken from the offing to the shore:
So in my heart, deeper than passion or
The golden moods of calm, has ever bloom'd
My love of innocent Polyxena;
And, for she has no shame to tell to me
Her secrets, better know I than do you
She loves you.

COR.

And I guess, part from your speech
And part because the snow of your cymar
Has just the heaving of a summer wave,
That you, my princess, love me! ah, turn, turn
Your eyes upon me, even though more severe
They be than Rhadamanthus's regard.

CASS.

(Nay, there is no heave of my bosom now,
The while I tell thee that I love thee not.
E'en were Polyxena dead—speak not; begone.

[*Exit* CORÆBUS.

Ah me! ah me! and did my bosom heave?
Polyxena, much I love thee, sister mine,
More than myself! I have spoken a false speech
Which never for mine own sake had I done.
My sister, O my sister! I refute,
Do I not, Paris's philosophy?)

SCENE III.

PRIAM.

TROJANS! and all whose dwellings are betwixt
The pines of Ida and yon purple sea!
The circlet glittering round our royal brows,
The golden orb sway'd by our royal hand,
The robe gem-fasten'd, o'er our royal limbs
That droops its broider'd folds; these things of late
Have with their splendour mock'd your monarch's mind,
Which restless still, and dark within him moves;
And he knows well that though the clamours go
Up from the plain in honour of his state,
As they were wont when Peace was to the land

Sure as the flowing of Scamander's stream,
Yet that the hearts are restless as the throats.
And now I fear, and know ye with me fear—
Thus, when black cloudlets drifting o'er the sky,
Gather to one great cloud, nor any wind
Dares stir the awful stillness of the air
With e'en a bated breath, men wait the first
Swell of the deepening thunder with more dread
Than when the war in heaven, now at its height,
Flings far its fire and farther rings its peals.
And now—for to his people a king's heart
Should be, I deem, apparent as his crown—
The thing we dread is the bright lady fair
Of Greece—is Helen—whom the flower-wreathed prow
Of Paris lately from his Grecian voyage
Returning brought. [*Aside.*] It were not well to speak
My mind of him before the people. Would
Some Nereid had dragg'd the losel down,

Seizing his locks, which with aspalathus
He perfumes!—Therefore, people, my resolve
Is that, before the Spartan herald comes,
As come he will unless the war comes first,
We do despatch with escort of a fleet,
And with all speed, back to her palaces
Beside the broad Eurotas, Sparta's queen.—
Do ye applaud? Ye do. I give you thanks.

Enter CASSANDRA.

CASS.

The rush of the birth of the fountains,
Flash'd bright in the sunlight where
I saw the clouds on the mountains
As a gauze nigh floating in air;
The eagle,—storms to sheathe him
In thunder that day were none,
For the towers of Troy beneath him
Were plain to his eye as the sun.

The peaks and the piny ledges,
The leap, and the gliding flight
Of the rivers betwixt the edges
Of mountain and sea, were bright;
And the feet of the gay Hours morris'd,
Unshod of thunder and rain,
Over mountain and mountain forest,
Over sea and city-crown'd plain.

The sea with the sun upon it
Shone afar, and farthest arose
A dazzle that overshone it
Of high Samothracian snows.
Anigh in the pines was moving
A wind, neither loud nor drear,
But like to a whisper loving
Of Zephyr in Oread's ear.

The bee was aloft for the heather,
I heard the cicada sing,

The warmth of the sunshiny weather
Made buoyant the moth's weak wing;
And there, not as here they meander,
But rainbow-arching the fern,
The streams of the sacred Scamander
Were toss'd from the river god's urn.

And slowly the white clouds drifted,
And sunshine fathom'd each glen;
But high in her lone haunt lifted
Far over the cities of men;
The face that pale as a star is
Of her whom I sought had no smile;
The bride thou hast left, O Paris,
Forgot not to weep for a while.

Ye who dwell by streams that are wider
Than where I have seen them to-day,
Would ye know with what gift from Ida
My footsteps have come away?

From gold of the crocus valleys?
From purple of pine-woods high?
From silver of stream that sallies?
Nay; I bring but a prophecy.

The god Apollo met me
Where vair was the slope with flowers,
He vow'd that he would not let me
Escape to Ilion's towers;
What he ask'd of me I tell not,
A maiden pure am I still,
Yet a gift, though my girdle fell not,
I won, upon Ida's hill.

O Ilion under Ida!
O listen, while yet is pause;—
There draws upon horse and rider,
Upon breast and babe there draws,
On the lord in his bath who lingers,
On the slave who speedeth the grist,

On the boy with the lute in his fingers,
And the girl with the gold round her wrist,—

There draws a more furious thunder
Than ever did Ilion amaze,
While the width of heaven asunder
Was never unrent by the blaze;
While, fierce, with the leaping of leopards
The rivers of Troas came down,
And drifted the sheep and the shepherds
Nigh over the walls of the town.

But Ida may keep the glory
Of summer to-day it shows,
Be as blue to its summit hoary
As the gentian there that blows,
As the skies o'er its head unclouded,
And Ida's wild bees may hum
Over lawns by no vapour shrouded,
For not thence shall the darkness come!

Shall come, with no passing crashes
Of thunder, no transient fears,
But with end that will leave Troy ashes,—
A tempest of ten long years!
Shall come on her track who has sought us,
The track that was made, for our sighs,
O'er the sheen of the violet waters,
By the voyage of the violet eyes!

[*A general laughter ensues.*

PRIAM.

Trojans! and strangers harbour'd here in Troy,
Divinity within me works and gives
The lie to this dishevelled prophetess.
Is it with your acclaim that I revoke
Fair Helen's exile which I late decreed;
For it to her were exile, inasmuch
As Love, the lord of all, is potent o'er
The power that draweth men of fatherland?

Shall I revoke the sentence? Shall we bear
Ourselves as Trojans, not as timid deer?

ALL.

Ay!

PRIAM.

Your intrepid scorn of this wild girl
Rings to the Rhætian steep—her words are false.

CASS.

In this day of our glory the morning
Brings over the hills of the east
No task save the task of adorning
Ourselves for the hours of the feast.
On temples and palaces broken
The life of the slant ray expires,
And hardly may reach to give token
To the waves of the west of its fires.

But or roseate as a bride's blushes,
Or saffron-hued, like to her veil,

The morn over Troas that gushes
Shall soon be more full on the sail;
No temple or palace shall glister—
Where Ilion once was there shall be
A ruin burnt out, and a blister
Of plain betwixt highland and sea.

PRIAM.

Disperse ye with your hearts as careless as
Is youth before life's gray laborious days;
Swung on the wave, a furlong out to sea,
Or emptying his trawl upon the beach,
Beneath the shadow of Sigeum, let
The fisher have no fear except for storm,
Or futile toil; and may his fears be vain!
And where the glens grow narrower, and the groves
Higher, until they end, and out of them,
With here and there a pine and mountain ash,
And whitest stripe of torrent, ledge on ledge,

The bulk of Gargarus lessens to a peak
Too steep to keep its snows—there, 'mid the growth
That belts the mountain, let the forester
Think of no war but his against the pards.
And let the shepherd by Scamander's stream,
While, like the river, glides the summer's day,
Blue and unaltering in its lapse serene,
Be lull'd to a half-dream, where on the sward
He sits above the reeds, till scarce he knows
Which is, of the two murmurs in his ear,
The river's and which the browsing of his flocks.
And ye who dwell in Troy, let joy be yours
Of heart, and mirth of wine-empurpled lip;
And ye of Troy and Troas, think not of
The future, save of that fast-coming day
Which, with inaugurating litanies
And sacrifice that floods the temple floors,
And hymn that seems to lift the temple roof,
And then with lightfoot dances and the lyre,

And brows bloom-wreath'd, and faces flush'd
with wine,
That see the morning-star, shall make our hearts
Glad for the bridal of Polyxena;
Look how she blushes! nay, my sweetest child,
The lily is fair enough, nor needs, I think,
To borrow a red petal of the rose.

CASS.

War! war! there is war for Troas
Shall redden Scamander's reeds,
And Peace,—when the frieze lies low as
The base, amid rank-growing weeds;
Vain! vain! unheeded, as I am,
Shall knees be on temple stair;
He lives, who the halls of Priam
Shall strike with the grating share!

A knife that lifted to fall is
I see o'er the waves afar;

A lingering fleet at Aulis,
A vision of coming war!
By the gods!—they built our city—
It may be, it may be yet,
There is hope that gods may pity,
There is chance that men may forget.

Yes! Greeks will relent if Helen,
With the joy in her eyes, return,
Or gods will aid if the spell in
Our hearts of pleasure we spurn:
To the shore! to the shore! O hasten,
For children, and wives, and sires,
On our throats ere the war-dogs fasten,
Ere falls our city in fires!

PRIAM.

Prophetic are Cassandra's words, and us
Should gladden and make sure that men shall say
In after time, with envy of our lot:—

" These were the men who lived as peacefully
As now they rest, after the golden days
That went like hours, in Priam's far-off reign."
So shall the speech run of the future time;
For now, by virtue of that sense divine
Which is implanted in a king, I know
That my wild daughter's words, even as are dreams,
Are true in this, that their reverse is true.

SCENE IV.

THE CHORUS.

HYMEN! thou lord of blushes,
And darkness lovelier far
Than light's most lovely flushes
Around eve's brightening star.

Hymen! be thou propitious
On this her bridal day,
When joy is avaricious
Of sweet Polyxena!

Past are the nuptial torches,
And charr'd, for all to see;
Duly before the porch is
The jewell'd axle-tree.

Cassandra! bind thy tresses,
And flee to hide thy shame,
Up to the hill recesses
From which thy bodings came!

Out on thee, pale proud virgin,
Who ne'er knew lover's kiss!
No parcel hath thy dirge in
A singing like to this!

O the light-footed goddess, who shoots like a lance,—
For Hera from heaven moves e'en as we dance,—
We are swift as that huntress whose wont is to wear
The moon on her brow and the stars in her hair;
The roses that wreathe us are red, but seem white,
So rapidly circles the speed of our flight,
But their colour returns when we sudden restrain
Our feet at the swiftest, and sing our refrain—

" O Hymen, O Hymen," and tell our desire
To the unseen god nigh us whom flowers attire
With a crown, and he holdeth a sceptre of fire;
Him each girl of us prays for a veil, and to have
A groom like Corœbus, as comely and brave!
O Hymen! O Hymen! if grace we have found
Let thy marjoram wreath fling a fragrance around,
And grant, if a god may by mortals be seen,
One glimpse of the smile on thy loveable mien:
Thou art hid; yet, O sisters, methinks, I perceive
A more divine scent than of wreaths here we weave;
It may be the boding Cassandra prevents
More sign of thy presence than flower-flung scents.
Our malison on her! as once she fled, still,
Accurs'd thorough valley, accurs'd over hill,
May she fly, with a fancied Apollo behind,—

That the fairest of gods should in vain have been
kind!—
May the winds that blow on her be ne'er from the
West!
May her woe by no gladness be ever redress'd!
For she cross'd us in peace, and foretold us of
wars,
Of a battle-smoke soon that should blot out our
stars!
Like the thunder in summer fear us did affray,
And has pass'd, like the thunder in summer,
away!
The lute, not the trumpet, the scarf, not the shield,
The gay banquet-hall, not the red battle-field,
Shall be ours; and kind heaven our peace shall
prolong
Till the flowing shall end of Scamander the
strong!
No darts, but from Eros's bow, shall escape,
No blood flow in Troy but the blood of the grape;

And, quench'd in long sunshine, the prophecies dark
Of Cassandra shall pass e'en from memory;—
Hark!

What a tumult's abroad! to that sudden shout listen!
It leaps to the stars high above us that glisten;
What burden is this that the revellers bear
To join our "O Hymen" that shakes the still air?
Have the youths made a song to Polyxena's charms?
—Aphrodite protect us! the shout is, "To arms!"
One fleeth this way with the cry on his lips—
"Ho! what means this panic?" he answers, "The ships!"
And with spear in his hand, and his arm within shield,
And greaves but half buckled, he rushes a-field;

What meant his reply?—O! palsying fear!
The hunt for false Helen is up, and is here;
The seas of our goddess their ships would not
stay—
Take thy grasp from my garments!—away, girls,
away!

ACT II. SCENE I.

CASSANDRA.

ENONE!

ŒNONE.

Is it news thou bringest me
From Troy?

CASS.

The Greeks are come.

ŒNONE.

And Helen gone?
Thou answerest not—she stays; stay not with me.

CASS.

At peril from the intercepting Greeks,
Œnone, I have sought thy mountain cave

To tell thee that the unbroken slopes of shale,
Which sheer beneath thee fall, and the rough
blocks
Of huger stones than warriors could heave,
And the one ash that flourishes aloft
And whitens with the passing mountain storm,
Here by thy cave, a hardier thing than thou,
May guard thee from wild beasts, but not from
men;
And that thou must return with me to Troy:
For, sweet Œnone, know that Ida's slopes
Are free no more to anything, save air;
And with the natural solace comfort thee
That thou art not unfortunate alone;
For ended is at last of Ilion's feast
The long unbroken day, whose summer seem'd
A glory not more transitory than
The songs Apollo makes; but now no more
Upon the pleasant holms at evenfall
The girls and youths link dances; or the girls

O'erload with bloom their flower-baskets, while
The youths, with tenor of their flutes, give forth
A music sweeter than the honey borne
Past them by hiving bees; perfect in vain
The peace of evening falls upon the land:
But betwixt Trojan town and Grecian tent
The ringing battle sways, the chariots charge,
And irresistible Achilles swoops
Like lightning on the forest of our spears.

ŒNONE.

And Paris?

CASS.

Spends the hours upon his hair;
But think not thou art the only hapless one,
Œnone; for Corœbus is or slain
Or captive; he to sudden battle rush'd
Upon his marriage eve, the morn of war.
And our white lily, paler than her wont,
Sits, looking piteously at the stole

He for his armour doff'd:—dost thou regret
The broken bridal of Polyxena?

ŒNONE.

Bid Paris hither come, and I will change
This cavern for another that I know;
'Tis higher up the mountain, and its glen
Sinks, like a mine, into the fir-forest,
Whose broad belt, drawn along the steep hill-side,
Will guard my Paris better than yon towers;
And if the leaguer burst of hostile men
Up the long precipices, and the shout
Ring, where was only sound of breeze or bird,
Since these hard gum-smear'd trunks that are thick for miles
Were saplings—still there is shelter—in my arms;
They will not slay a girl; and I will be
Pierced, as is armour, ere his flesh is grazed.

CASS.

Thou thinkest only of thine own cross'd love,

Œnone; but thine arms thou speakest of,
They are so wasted when I look at them,
From the round pearls of a still recent day;
I cannot blame thee, we may spare to reprove
The soul, when the heart is broken; . . .on me now
Comes with swift wing my visionary hour;
She asks not why my stature lifts itself,
Why on my limbs is tremor, and in my eyes
Unearthly passion—wild, and yet serene;—
Nothing she notes, a year might pass before
She raised her downcast face, or stirr'd at all;
Ah me! ah me! the vision of her end
Comes clear from out the mist of future things,
The prophecy is hot upon my lip,
I scarce can stay it.

ŒNONE.

Do not clasp me thus.—
Thine arms, Cassandra, are not Paris's.
Why is thy gaze as Paris's once was—long?

CASS.

Wilt thou not follow me down the mountain lawns
To safer shelter than, from beasts and men,
There can be here? thou canst not, for thy limbs
By most exhausting power of hopeless love
Are sapless, as a crone's from wear of years.

ŒNONE.

I would to Troy, but Helen is in Troy.
Bring Paris hither.

CASS.

Paris—that—well—I will.
Farewell, Œnone, this once let my arms
Hold thee a moment, and my gaze be long,
My playmate of past days, upon thy face,
That in our smiling days smiled more than mine.

SCENE II.

PARIS.

PRITHEE, Cassandra, slower. I have come
Hither. For change. And change, alas, I
have.
The hill is steep; 'tis too precipitous.
My limbs ache; O for rest! for Helen's lap!

CASS.

Hadst thou desired a change, and from the mesh
Of thy Greek courtezan's caressant hair
To disentangle thee, a furlong's space
Was all betwixt her smiles and their red fruit.

PARIS.

But, then, the blood. To see it, heaves my gorge.

Rough are the Greeks; they might have wounded
me.
This hill's too steep; besides, when one slope's
climb'd,
Appears another still. My feet, too, slide,
The shale is slippery. I will return.

CASS.

Nay, let me to your vanity appeal,
A trifle more of climbing,—you shall have
A triumph such as Hector never won.

PARIS.

You are satirical. O me, this hill!
And I am shameless. You offend me not.
Who am not a fool. But a philosopher.
Do you remember—how this climbing takes
My breath—do you remember, ere I sail'd
For Greece, we talk'd together? It was then
I prophesied to you the prophetess.

Hinted that though man may have wings, he must
Not fly with them, lest overstrainèd flight
Leave him no power of pinion, e'en so much
As to resist a swift and shameful fall.
And now which in the difference betwixt
Us twain, Cassandra, has the best of it?
I who scorn men, or you who are scorn'd by men;
You who chose love and knowledge, soul and mind,
Or I, who neither hate nor love my race,
Who look not in the faces of the Hours
Save for what festal wreaths may hide their brows,
I, to men's praise or blame indifferent?

CASS.

Your feet climb falteringly. There is no son
Of Priam taller, statelier than you,
Who languish up a slope which girls can climb;
But in the Grecian tents they say is one,
Nireus by name, who is more fair than thou.

PARIS.

Curse on the liars! Cretan speech is truth
Compared to theirs. Fame over all the world
Sows broadcast Paris's name.

CASS.

I think 'tis known
In Lacedæmon, and I would that there,
Whither we climb, it never had been heard.

PARIS.

Nireus! a deeper curse befall him than
Would strike a god for broken Stygian oath;
Nireus, forsooth!

CASS.

My noble brother! moved
Neither by praise nor blame; neither by Troy's
Wounds nor Œnone's broken heart, thy works—

And yet—there is hope for men who vaunt their
sin;
Hope will forbear more from the soul of man
Than wife from husband; and her deadly hate
Comes, or is absent, with Hypocrisy.

PARIS.

As for Œnone, I would stake a steed
She has had, or wanted, since I tired of her,
Another fere, as is the wont of girls.
The snow lies low upon this sudden lawn;
Ha! 'tis a white stole—something is beneath.

CASS.

Yes! . . . . .
Death is beneath; death rigid on the limbs
Which late were youthful with Œnone's life:
And not low skies of morning, leaden hued,
At its hot core, nor pale green lights of eve,

Nor clouds where roseate bloom is even more
brief
Than was her own, nor star-shine braided heaven,
Shall reach the eyes o'er which [*she stoops*] I now
draw down
The wan lids that have felt so many tears.
Laugh, sing some lilt, Paris, that wears the strings
Of Paphian lutes; nay, dance, for to thy feet
Of climbing there is unexpected end.
Thou spakest truly, Paris, she has sought
And found a new love, and forgotten thee,
In his embrace—in the embrace of Death.

PARIS.

Surprise at this works less with me than thee;
Hadst thou foreknowledge of her piteous death?

CASS.

Yes, of the time of it, not of the place;
Of late, at entrance of her mountain cave,

I stood beside her—me she much besought
To bring thee hither, and while she besought
The knowledge came to me that not again
Œnone's sad voice, and her sadder eyes,
Should meet with mine, till I had welcomed
Death,
(As much almost as she), and found her where
Eros ne'er was, in a dim quiet land
Beside a stream I covet, Lethe's stream.
And I knew, too, that she should die the first,
And on this mountain, and upon this morn—
That blood upon her stole! it gives the lie,
I think, to what you say of girlish faith.

PARIS.

'Twas cruelty in thee to bring me here.

CASS.

Why?—but I mind me now of what you said,
It is the sight of blood offends your eyes;

Forgive me, I foreknew not that her death
Would other be than thou mightst view unmoved ;
—Nay, I had better hope of thee than this.
And I was kind, not cruel ; for I thought
That what nor curses of thy countrymen,
Nor thy sire's anger, nor thy brother's scorn,
Nor any fear that still thou hast of Heaven,
Could bring to pass, with thee, a sight like this
Of poor Œnone dead for love of thee,
Might haply bring to pass ; think of the days
When no more ceased thy fond words in her ears
On these high lawns than did the cicale's song ;
And how her feet came eager to meet thine
Over the crocus and the ground ivy :
Nor less the crocus and the ground ivy
Now carpet all the sward than then they did ;
And eager o'er them came her feet to-day,
But not so lightly as they came of yore.
Nobler thou wast in those long-perish'd days ;
Looking on this sweet corpse, return to them.

Repentance to Œnone's lover were
More easy than to Helen's paramour.

PARIS.

Let us begone. Think not I am not moved.
Were I a fool, Cassandra, I should hold
Myself repentant, and make thee elate
At working what not miracles may work:
But this I know, that whatsoe'er, (to take
Your phrase,) I, as Œnone's lover, vow,
I, whom with all men Habit has for slave,
Shall, ere long break, as Helen's paramour.

CASS.

O Paris, Paris, ruin at thy feet
Wrought by thee lies; and far below yon gorge
Where blue Scamander broadens through the bowers,
A dim foreknowledge tells me there will soon
Another ruin lie, of Ilion;

And every spear that wounds a Trojan now
Thy hand has flung it, thine has lit the fire
That dimly blazes in my second sight;
And roaring grows and flings out longer arms,
And, to a pyramid soaring, removes Troy,
And sinking when its brief fierce reign is done,
Gives back not what it took, long porticoes,
The busy mart, the palace, where the feast
Sounds from within; the solemn marble shrines—
Up to which the white garments glittering go—
A city splendid, opulent and gay,
In terrace upon terrace rising o'er
The blue plain where' not even may wings reach
home.
Gives back not this great glory which it took,
But where Troy was, some ashes, and few stones,
And that which shall be to all future time
A wonder, and a pity, and a fame!

I bid thee forth from out the harlot's arms,

Nor less because it is too late to amend
Thy wasted life; but death is in thy hands,
Nor less is how to die than how to live,
A care to men of honour, therefore, fight
And fall for Ilion that falls for thee.

PARIS.

I will go down to Troy, and leave thee here
To tend Œnone, or what once was she,
And will return with things that may bestow
Some ceremony on her burial.

ACT III. SCENE I.

CHORUS.

O we may pass, at last, from out the gates,
The Greeks are gone; ah, bitter as the brine
Which lifts them from us, have they made our fates,
And trebly bitter mine.

Say'st thou that pleasure is more sweet for pain?
That, liberated from long leaguer, we
By strong Scamander's banks may dance again,
And sing and kiss? ah, me!

Man has a heavy lot, but heavier rods
Smite woman, to the splendour of whose eyes
Youths look, as to the stars look they whose gods
Are visible in the skies.

Girls' lips, men say, have life and death for them;
War in their hearts than love is paler fire:
A lover would, to kiss a garment's hem,
Forego the crown and lyre;

But oh! the serpent in the flowery grass!
The death that is not parent of the grave!
For to this goddess it must come to pass
To be scorn'd, as is a slave,

When bloom, which is as Aphrodite's zone,
Fades, and love's voice is silent in the ears,
Nor life remains, except a monotone
Of apathetic years.

But I am thrice unblest; what good is it
To me that pleasures now to Troy return?
I joy in them as those rejoice in wit
Who are dust within the urn.

What is the song, when it allures not men?
The dance, unless it wins their eyes, should cease;
War may bring death—so it is better, when
The bloom is past, than peace.

What cares the rose for summer, if the suns
Belated are, and she is overblown
Ere from the south the spreading warmth fore-runs
The glorious flying throne?

When hands are idle hearts their work begin;
Peace now is ours, alas! for me too late,
Whose girlhood went while panic was within,
And strife without the gate.

My feet forget the dance—'tis ten years since
They plied it, when Polyexna was wed;
E'en now, 'tis said, to our rescue by her prince
Mygdonian troops are led—

Not needed—though, indeed, if the last lie
Of raven-soul'd Cassandra should be true,
And Greece come back with fire, what care I
Whose rose is turn'd to rue?

SCENE II.

CASSANDRA *at the shrine of* APOLLO.

CASSANDRA.

STILL on the far verge of the eastward plain
Gathers no dust; Corœbus, thy escape
From long captivity was vain for us,
For still thou comest not; and now is built
Up to its highest step yon altar where
Polyxena must perish. I would give,
To see the dawn of thy far-flashing spears,
My hope of early death. But yestereve
Thy succour would have seem'd superfluous,
A mere bravado to the beaten Greeks,
At last, forsooth, departing;—'twere to-day
As useless, for the intervening night
Of fury and alarm, of fire and sword,
Sets morn for ever far from Ilion!

How splendid shone the city yesterday,
As though triumphant, and all Troas laugh'd
In sunlight!—Ida of the many peaks,
The terraced town, the champaign, and the shore
Where Greece seem'd gathering to her distant ships.
Our citizens were out upon the plain,
And, after ten wild years, our rivers were,
With their cool streams and shades, our friends again,
And, all her tears gone, Polyxena,
Expectant of Corœbus, look'd adown
The garlanded gay street—and now the knife
Is almost at her throat! not even Greeks,
Surely, would more than threaten such a deed,—
Whose end is not of those that I fore-know.
Enough, that Trojans are all slain or ta'en,
And their rejoicing Troy a ruin charr'd
By stratagem, and a more fatal night
Than that which gave the Danaids revenge.

I think 'tis pity this base stratagem,
Bloody as base, should not have fail'd to end
This memorable siege where Victory
So long poised doubtfully her eagle wings
O'er valour great and patient on both sides,
As his, the mighty hero's, whose sad eyes,
Strain'd over Calpe, swept the western wave
For those blest isles where flowers blow, but no wind.
And—ha!—below there—on the plain—the shout!
The press—it hides the altar—is she there?

O hand uplifted falter,
O priest with the knife forbear;
O ye gods—is she laid on the altar?
Is it bloody, her soft brown hair?

[*She kneels.*

God of the bow that errs not! Giver of death!
Monarch of light, and master of the lyre!

Without whom all the beauty of the earth,
Save for dim Dian and her dimmer stars,
Were dark as the dread realms that own thee not;
With whom that earth is glory, spreading 'neath
Thy beamy throne hues, golden, red, and vair
Of flowers, and green of groves, and blue of hills,
Save of their windy summits, when alight
Thine amethystine sandals! Power! to whom,
Besides the lordship of the visible light,
Belongs the illumination of the soul;
Without whom man is blind in spirit, and base,
With whom, from dwarf deform'd, sullen, and harsh,
His soul grows to a giant, gracious, pure,
And nobly scornful, with a front as nigh
To heaven as that lone Titan's, who bears up
For ever the pale burden of the stars:
God! who didst loosen once the laurel wreath
About thy brows with turmoil of the chase,
O'er Ida after me, Cassandra, here

Thy suppliant; O let this memory sway
Thee, as, in men, thou swayest memory!
O think how thy communicated breath
That is life and love and blessing otherwhere,
To me came with a curse, and blasted me
For ever from the nature of a girl,
And do me some amends; spare, king, O spare!
By thy deep eyes, and ample uplift brow,
Spurn thy revenge, and spare Polyxena!

I will look forth from where the parapet
Is half burnt down, and ragged from the flames:
Far down below me is the plain; on it,
Betwixt what seem two threads as motionless
And blue as a steel helmet-rim, and are
Simois and great Scamander; on the space
Whose level stretches broad betwixt these streams
I see the multitude sway to and fro
Of cruel Greeks, and hidden by their press
Stands the high altar, and I mark the advance

Towards it of those who lead Polyxena;
For whom the crowd parts upon either side,
And closes up again. O that fierce, hoarse cry,
Bloodthirsty from a myriad of throats!
In Ilion's happy day that is no more,
Not such the murmur which through breathless air
Arose to priestesses, their rites perform'd,
Who look'd down hence—but sound of shrilly flutes
And laughter distance-temper'd—and the shout
Of those who hurl'd the quoit, or, joyously
Tried the mock skirmish with their blunted spears.

The murmur grows, 'tis edged now with alarm,
They press out eastwards now—those are not Greeks
That meet them, as though a sudden sea should roll
To meet the long Ægean shoreward swell

With a roar, and a flinging far of foam, as of spears;
The murmur rises now to wild and shrill,
The plain is all in tumult—O for this
Bright hope of rescue, I pour thanksgiving.
Apollo—yes, the battle cry sounds up—
Apollo—thanks to thee—Corœbus comes!

SCENE III.

PARIS.

SINCE from the flame-lit tumult of the night
I fled into this cellar and there crouch'd,
Forth-looking but to hear of the defeat
Of some tumultuous rescue—since the night,
This phial of hemlock juice a score of times
Has risen to my lips, and been withdrawn
A score of times, save one; suppose once more
I argue with myself—I have leisure now,
And something need to while away the time;

For even if in this dark and dismal place
Some one had left a lute, I durst not sweep
Its strings, lest on me I should draw the Greeks.
Now, let me see, if I kill not myself
The Greeks will kill me, or they, at the least,
Will make a slave of me, and lop my hair;
The most might very like be more than death
That they would do. I had best be brave and drink.
I shall be more esteem'd in Tartarus,
And be there sooner but by half an hour;
And even though the gibber of some ghosts
Shall quaver round me angrily, yet one
Will have soft words, and whatsoe'er a ghost
May show of love and kindness; I shall feel
Œnone's shadowy arms around my shade.
I fear one's life will be monotonous;
But upon Charon I may put some jests
And flirt a little with Persephone.
Ten minutes more, for ordering my hair
Before this pocket mirror—I am pale.

This ringlet is too dry—its twist wants oil—
The hemlock juice will moisten it—so—the rest
I—courage, Paris—drink—and wait for death.

SCENE IV.

CASSANDRA.

FAR-DARTER, though thine ear be hitherto
Rejectant of my prayers, yet once again
My knees are bent, my hands are raised to thee.
If aught thou hast of pity; if thou art
Less marble than thy statues, grant this prayer.
Choose from thy shoulder-shaken quiver out
The keenest pointed, truest-feather'd shaft,
And shoot it through this heart of mine, that I
May in the same hour with Polyxena
Reach the dim shore, where we shall find the sad
Œnone, playmate of our happy youth.

Where, if the wave be sullen, and the land
Arid and dark, nor ever any voice,
Save shrill weak wailing sometimes of a ghost
Challenge the silent victory of night;
Yet, if may be we drink of Lethe's stream,
There are no memories of lost joy and pride;
And, certes, red-hand slaughter is not there,
Nor scorn for prophecies that are but too true,
Nor love suppress'd in hearts that therefore break.

Enter CORÆBUS, *wounded.*

COR.

Cassandra!

CASS.

Thou here with thy routed troops?
Fly—stay—thou—

COR.

Didst thou speak of love suppress'd?

CASS.

Thou art wounded. Let me stanch it with my robe.

COR.

I am wounded to the death by a chance spear,
Yet the lost battle have I left to find
Thee, and have found thee. Hear my last few words,
Cassandra, and support me with thine arm,
And hold thy raiment tighter to my heart;—
I play'd, I think, the honourable man
To sweet Polyxena, whose life, with mine
'Tis like, is bleeding now away; but hear
The last words that I speak, which through my life
All speeches of my heart had for refrain.
Thou, thou, Cassandra wast, and art, my love,
And shalt be if love lives in phantom-land;
If thou, Cassandra, couldst declare that thou

Hadst love for me, suppress'd, as late I heard,
My end upon this earth were easier than
The end of those here, who, as fable runs,
Or truth, I know not, pass'd from this dull sphere
To the high feast of gods, nor yet knew death.

CASS.

Yes, I may speak; lean lower thy dear head—
Move not thy lips—thine eyes, alas, seem not
To know me, but thine ears can drink my words.
I loved thee ever—nor was my love the less
Because it was despair; and I have felt
'Twas this that made Apollo's passion vain.
Lift not thy lips, I will stoop mine own..... This kiss,
Ah me! is younger than my lover's death.
A maiden's love is ever a soft thing,—
I am strangely gentle in my mood, nor mad,
Nor sad above his corpse. Hark! from the plain

Leaps one great shout, as high as Ida's peak,
And all the gathering of the people parts,
And I can just perceive the altar's pile;
O ye great gods! if vengeance is in Heaven
For barbarous deed of hell, let it o'erwhelm
That coward shout; it greets my sister's blood;
Red is that altar now, and all my tears,
Which my soft sorrow for Corœbus had,
Are turn'd to fire now for Polyxena.

Enter Greeks.

First Greek.

Princess, we are sent by Agamemnon's lips
To bear thee to his tent.

Cass.

This sword I snatch
From my dead lover's side is my reply—
Until I have cursed you with the bitterest lips
That hate, and fury, and contempt, can writhe.

First Greek.

We had best wait till Agamemnon comes,
For the wild prophetess is very fair;
Look how her noble stature and high brow
Front us, on these the loftiest temple steps
Of Troy, o'erlooking the charr'd terraces,
And the wide champaign to its fringe of sea,
And blue length of the streams, and e'en the slopes
Where first they rise of Ida far away.
She waves her wild white arms—the wrath is pale
Upon her mouth—she pours her prophecy.

Cass.

Go back, with more contumely laden
Than ever were slaves, to your lord;
Tell him this—Greeks can murder a maiden,
But not if she brandish a sword;
At last your revenge may content ye,
O well is your victory won!
Of our men slain by night you repent ye—
And slaughter our maids in the sun!

The hissing of spear-shafts is over,
No sweat now nor blood is outpour'd,
Sad silence is falling to cover
The space where the red battle roar'd;
Struck are tents, and your sails ye are setting,
And Troy where the mirth was, shall soon,
And for ever, all sounds be forgetting,
Save jackal's howl under the moon.

And Greece shall rejoice in her glory;
There children shall cease from their play,
Hearts burn under heads that are hoary,
E'en lovers their whispering stay,
To hear, while the hours fleet unheeded
By charm of the rhapsodist's strain,
How the gods the just vengeance impeded,
Of Greece upon Troy, and in vain.

Yet it shall be that Greece shall a guerdon
E'en greater of glory enjoy;

She shall lay on Fame's pinions the burden
Of Salamis rather than Troy:
She has sat for ten years in pavilions,
Ere levell'd were one city's towers;
But the might of the Orient's millions
Shall be laid by her low in ten hours.

Nor her fame shall be only of valour,
Whose voice, like a fierce clash of arms,
Shall over the East spread a pallor,
And over the West stir alarms.
Her arts shall command the world's wonder,
And the star of her arms shall be down,
When there lives in men's ears, like a thunder
Of music, the gentler renown.

She shall build, and her structures in ruin,
Than others that stand be more fair;
She shall carve, and for ever be new in
Men's souls, to the sculptor's despair.

She shall paint, and when canvas and colour
Are lost by Time's fury and fret,
All pictures to men shall seem duller
Than her's which are but a regret.

Her words shall be fire in all ages,
Wherever the tyrant's abhorr'd;
The life shall not fail of her sages
Wherever the fool is not lord.
The uttermost reach of Time's river
Shall end, ere her epic's flight tire,
With echo that waxes for ever,
Her hand shall be loud on the lyre.

The names of her nymph-hiding fountains,
And muse-haunted hills shall be known
To men through all time as the mountains
And streams of the land that they own;
The souls shall her fulness inherit,
Of statesmen, and sage, and those whom

The beauty and blight of the spirit
Have gifted with glory and gloom.

Yes! Greece shall have empire outlasting
The kingdoms of earth that shall be
On the long lapse of Time, as the wasting
Of foam on a turbulent sea:
The crown set her starry eyes over
No rude hands of change shall unbind,
For its realm, which the skies fail to cover,
And night to conceal, is the mind!

First Greek.

All know Cassandra's blessing is a bale,
Some dread mishap is boded to our land.

Cass.

But think ye that Ilion's daughter,
To bless, not to curse ye, here stands?
Her lover's, her sister's late slaughter,
Ye cravens, yet drips from your hands!

Intent to my words ye have hearken'd,
Now hear of your country's long shame;
The cloud by the sun is but darken'd,
And disgrace shall be blacker for fame.

A dull, bitter herb is the sorrel,
In Troy turn'd to fields it shall grow,
And greenly the conquering laurel
On Greece's proud forehead shall show;
But a time there shall be of despising
The strength that made Ilion to cease,
When the sun shall be weary of rising
On deeper dishonours of Greece.

Greece! Wisdom and Valour shall put her
High over the nations of earth;
But to fall, nor have spirit to mutter
A curse on the hour of her birth;
At the base of the throne she once sat on
She shall be as a footstool—and there

She shall grovel, and fawn, and be spat on,
And, out of her meanness, forbear.

The swords that are offer'd to do her
Their service, she faintly shall aid,
The cowardice still shall cling to her
That butcher'd yon yet bleeding maid.
Her sons but to lies in the city,
And theft on the seas, shall be born,
When her past shall draw tears forth of pity,
Her present shall freeze them to scorn.

Is victory reft from the Dardan?
That vengeance of scorn still remains;
Misfortune like *ours* may have pardon,
We shall not be content to be slaves.
But Greece, the world's mightiest nation,
Shall yet be its meanest, and cower,
As base in her long degradation
As fierce in her conquering hour.

Nor men only shall not avail her:—
When fortune's clear shining is done,
When Time's gather'd tempests assail her,
Her gods shall fall, each from his throne;
Her gods, by whose power we have perish'd,
Who brought Helen safe o'er the sea;
Who slaughter'd my sister most cherish'd,
And poison'd the gift they gave me.

Yes! Jove, the great god and gross lover,
And Pallas, and Pan, and the rest,
Like so many Vulcans flung over,
Shall fade to a fable and jest;
The gods as their Greeks would I banish,
Would spoil them of victim and priest;
And the one I should grieve to see vanish
The most, men would mourn for the least.

First Greek.

Her ecstasy grows languid, and the breath
Of fierce false inspiration fades in her.

CASS.

That one is, O false, fair Apollo,
Most heavenly traitor! not thou,
Who vainly Cassandra didst follow
With Daphne's death green on thy brow.
'Tis the god who is lord of pale Hades,
Where all things, save quietness, cease;
I would fain be assured where, when fade his
Dim meadows and streams, may be peace.

FIRST GREEK.

Princess, we, listening, learn that our fair land
Shall always prosper, and our holy gods
Who have given us victory always in return,
Have honour from our honourable vows.
But lo! thy master, Agamemnon, comes,
I see his plumes where they had yesterday
Bent, ere the fire left of yon arch but shafts.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

TIED TO THE TOWN.

O SUMMER, swaying thy sceptre over
Sea quiet as hill, hill blue as sea,
Thou hast love for all things except thy lover,
O Summer, my love, I am mock'd of thee.
I would be near thee, I would be risen
From the blinding world-wave that beats me down;
But, alas! thy throne is not near my prison,
For I am tied to the flowerless town.

What is it to me that men say she reigneth,
The glorious Summer, everywhere;

This Summer, who rules the town, attaineth
But in name to be like my mistress fair.
My love had flowers in her golden tresses,
And I heard her voice where the brooks descend;
And she stepp'd o'er the green hill-wildernesses,
And stopp'd in the vales, where the faint ways end.

And I know that my queen for a brief, bright season,
Beyond my amorous sight now stands,
Giving, while stay'd is the thunder's treason,
Fires from her eyes and flowers from her hands.
She has worship enough—it does not grieve her
That my lips may not to her robe be drawn,—
The sun for the love of her will not leave her,
For his last light dies not before his dawn.

Her joy over earth like a song is ringing,
The clouds are as pearls for her, strung in air;

Scarce at her feet is the blue wave swinging,
And the wind will not lift her warm gold hair.
O lovely Summer! as Palamon, longing,
When his love was nigh, at her feet to be,
With the dungeon bars his desire still wronging,
So yearn I, love of my soul, for thee.

O queen who makest of earth a garden,
Thy realms thou losest, but never thy throne;
By the sweetness of thy smile, a pardon
For the world he hates from Time is won;
Till the days when thy rich imperial charm is
No longer only to me denied;
When the lags of the flight of the flower armies
Are crush'd by the conquering Winter's stride.

O Summer! Summer! my love thou knowest,
It was born with my youth, O grant me one
Of the long rich smiles before thou goest,
Thou givest thy lover the lingering sun.

O! because I love in less fading fashion
Than he—at thy bright feet let me cleanse
My soul with wells of divinest passion,
Ere the grey gorse turneth to gold in the glens.

ON CALPE.

A SKETCH.

HE pauses: now to him no more still seems
Sky nearer, and sea farther, but the lands
Are all beneath him; skimm'd by sunset, gleams
The ocean of his search; gazing, he stands.

Sun-splendours jewelling an ampler breast
Of sea than he has seen; no sail, no soil,
Water, and wind, and wings—this was the West,
This the reward of pioneering toil.

Yet a more sweet reward to hero than
Far o'er the surges if that long seaboard
Had reach'd his gaze, to prophesy how man
Should of the West, as of the East, be lord.

Of which he deem'd not—rather to the sun,
The fellow traveller of his westering way,
With envy look'd, wishing he too might shun
Men, by the breadth of the Atlantic spray.

Not all ill-starr'd, for though fate him compell'd
'Mid men to work, and not have life's desire,
Solace he found in scorn of things withheld,
Friendship and love, wine, leisure, and the lyre.

Loathing he had for trivial human things,
As of the monsters he must still subdue;
Less sad than was the wisest of earth's kings,
To look on the world's rose, and name it rue.

Not his the Ithacan's deep-studied part
To wander everywhere, and all to please;
With an unrest more noble at his heart,
Beyond the haunts of men, came Hercules.

Restless and tameless as the lion, whose
Spoil his broad shoulders bare, he saw mankind,
And knew them, and by knowledge did not lose
The melancholy of the greater mind.

Men's earth, he deem'd, was ended with this shore,
So yearn'd to stand and watch where only sky
Rose from a water-world, that ne'er upbore
The dust Death spurns with heel of victory.

But if that sunset-silent West had given
A wind forth, prophesying there should live
Beyond those waves where yet no ship had striven,
The life from which he now was fugitive—

Vainly he had climb'd Calpe to forget
Care on its rock; but, failing to divine

O'er the illimitable violet,
Aught of mankind, he found his anodyne.

* * * * *

From such a rock, o'er the same ocean range,
Long after Hercules, Napoleon
Thus watch'd the sunset, wondering no change
Show'd of the orb on Austerlitz that shone.

One rid the world of monsters, one of men;
Earth is betwixt them on their thrones of fame;
I think, could Hercules be umpire, then
Their merit were less different than the same.

But now brow was not knit, nor lips were stern,
He dropp'd his club, forgot his latest scars,
Gazing, while Heaven pour'd from its deep blue urn,
First flowers—the sunset, and then gems—the stars.

Yet somewhere set in the Atlantic seas,
  Those islands of the Blest still fail'd his ken,
Where was desire to roving Hercules
  To rest, with heroes—not with gods, or men.

At last the hero down the steep that burn'd
  No more (for the sun's bow was now unbent),
From wondering at the silent West, return'd
  To wearying of the loud Orient.

Not knowing, to the champaign as he drew,
  How those twin rocks were rent to his renown,
But ill-content, while twilight dropp'd, and dew,
  Upon the pale leaves of his poplar crown.

THE RECTOR'S APOLOGY.

I'M bless'd with a fair benefice, the living may
be worth
Five hundred pounds a year, at most; east, west,
or south, or north,
Where'er it is, it matters not, if you try you won't
divine,
For there's many a country rector in a plight
resembling mine.

Though what I'm going to tell of might make
a bishop swear,
I've hitherto borne patiently Life's load of cark
and care;

But when my *Punch** turn'd on me, who was
wont that care to while,
'Twas a case of *Et tu, Brute,* and it fairly roused
my bile.

You say I starve my curate, that I put, without
remorse,
His precious life in danger, and work him like
a horse,
While I play the magnifico—you go a deal too
far,
You little know, thrice happy *Punch,* what curates
really are.

A cottage *not* in ruins, and ninety pounds a
year,
A pittance, as you'd call it, I suppose, I give him
clear;

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* These verses were first published in *Punch.*

I can't afford to offer more, and still perform
the feat,
With wife and growing family, of making both
ends meet.

A gentlemanly curate who shows, without pre-
tence,
That white ties are compatible with charity and
sense,
Is rare as bird of Paradise; I scatter sans
avail,—
For like it, he alights not—the salt for such a
tail.

The lion in the pulpit, and out of it the dove,
I mean the Evangelical, whom all old ladies love,
The slap-you-on-the-back sort, that are muscular
and "broad,"
The hectic-flush'd who fast, and wear a miniature
of Laud:

Yes, all I have found wanting, e'en, brought up
from a child
By careful aunts, the primly good and sentimental-
mild,
The Calvinist who damn'd us all one week, and,
which perplex'd
Our minds, the neologian who saved us all the
next.

A saint who carped at marriage, and preaching,
flung the pearls
To swine, if swine could take the form of pretty
English girls;
To have *one* wife, he said, was sin; not so the next
man, who
Made up, I very soon found out, for him, by
having two.

Another—scarce it edifies such curate freaks to
show,
Short, thick, and oleaginous, opinions very low;

He from Dissent converted, and, which scarce so
well I took,
Then married,—within six weeks from the day he
came,—my cook.

Next week the place is vacant; it often is; there
lies
The note of the sole applicant e'en now before my
eyes;
" Do I object to waltzing, some idiots do, if so,
What points at the whist parties, and is the
croquet slow?"

Well, *Punch*, old boy, you've 'sulted me, as once,
becoming " tight,"
My curate to the bishop said, and challenged him
to fight;
But vengeance, save a single wish, I'll lay upon
the shelf,
I only wish that you, *Punch*, were a rector like
myself.

THIRLMERE.

BENEATH the huge Helvellyn
A lake lies, long and fair,
Which, slenderly outswelling,
With any may compare;
Here widening and there narrow,
Like neck and breast of swan,
That soar'd for Dunmail's barrow
In elfin age agone;
But from the far north flying
Sank on tired pinion here,
And, with a wild song dying,
Was changed into a mere.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

IF thy notes, brown bird, over ocean heard
Could reach her shell-pink ear,
They would seem to her sweet, but ah, more sweet
My vows to her seem'd last year;
O nightingale, thy power now prove,
Yet thy best will in vain be sung;
If it challenge her share in the speech of a love
That is dead now, and should be young.

That is no more on at least one shore
Of the sea which apart us drave;
Yes! dead and buried, without, may be,
So much as a stone by its grave;
Yet, if our love be a toy which away
You on the one shore throw,
I, proud and glad of my agony, say
On the other it is not so.

She has a memory, hardly that,
My hope of her is as good;
She has trod on my heart, and its wine in the vat
Of her victims is redder than blood;
Her eyes now are soften'd for other feres,
Her laughter rings light and free,
While I am alone, and the bitterest tears
Would seem mirth were they shed by me.

"Love is the flower of life," I said;
And kiss'd you, that mouth of yours,
From others, as once from me, its red
Now averts yet kisses endures:—
Some one kisses you now! it is well for us all
That the sea betwixt us roars,
Or, dying, not wooing, he should fall
At the light-o'-love feet he adores!

And I am a Christian man, forsooth,
Yes! and better Christian than those

Who only for want of depth and truth
  Are quick to forgive their foes;
To foil the tempter I think God sets
  The broad blue bar of the main
'Twixt me and the land where my love forgets
  When she prays, to pray for my pain.

Girl! I hate you in spite of your spell;—
  We abide at the earth's extremes,
And I cannot reach to kill you,—well,
  I can kiss you—in my dreams;
O those eves we stood on the moonlit sward!
  If for them who on earth have striven
It be hard to lose it—how much more hard
  To have found, and then lost, heaven!

My dear, my darling,—yet I will come
  Though apart wild waves us rend,
Fitly the restless sea were my home,
  The passionate storm my friend:

I will come, though since she was mine, a score
Of lovers have sipp'd her charms,
I will kneel and forget to forgive, if once more
My love will lie in my arms.

Be still, wild heart! be my anger allay'd,
She is e'en like the rest of them;
To a baser than Cophetua's maid
I added a diadem.
But for pride, to follow her were not amiss,
For, although we met last year,
She has since forgot my face, and a kiss
That is strange, would, to her, be dear.

No! I will stay, and friends shall give
Few tears and many smiles;
"Wait," they say, "Time's strength will rebuild at length
The ruin wrought by her wiles.

When the years," they tell me, " from youth
detach
You far, you may meet perchance,
And lightly talk while you sit to watch
Her son and your daughter dance."

Yes, forsooth, she will see me and turn a third
Of her mind from match-making;
And, as if I had never won fonder word,
She, while ring of the dance follows ring,
Will give me her hand and I shall bend,
And with smiling indifference say,
" I am glad to see so fair a friend
Has found back hither her way."

Nay, never, O never shall this thing be!
The world may forget its wars,
The moon to draw the amorous sea,
The sun to light the stars;

If despair for the times when her heart lay on
mine,
For the minutes with kisses rife,
For the hours when I drank her eyes as wine,
Can cease to darken my life.

Yes! I forget not the days that drew
Up the world to empyreal height,
That banish'd the thunder, and overthrew
The great black towers of the night;
Should the norland wind be but bitter in frost
When his love, the Summer, is gone,
And the winds of the earth's end uttermost,
Her flower-kisses have won?

If the years that sever from youth and give
Less than they take away,
Would teach me like others forgetful to live
Of the love I told Heaven was for aye;

Let an early death be mine, and a grave
Where she shamed the nightingale's tongue,
And let the stone this epitaph have,
" Whom the gods love die young."

ICHABOD.

(*Written, June*, 1868.)

"SOMETHING too much of this"—of struggle, lest
Too slowly Life its soaring wings should ply;
I hope that, after Death, I may find rest,
And have a little, too, before I die.

"*Væ victis*," thunder'd the barbarian,
"Only the vanquish'd grieve." I think not thus;
I with an envious gaze the vanquish'd scan,
I, who am one of the victorious.

I, with "*en avant*" ringing in my ears,
I, on whose fatherland the Future smiles,

Here where the favour of the fickle years
Still is as sunrise o'er the Queen of Isles.

I, in my mood, turn from the masts that start
Like forests up from English estuaries,
—Turn from the gold on every busy mart
Falling in richer shower than Danae's.

From press and turmoil of the eager throng,
Shaking the ladder up whose rungs they strive,
From prosperous summer, ringing loud and long,
With busy buzzings of the giant hive.

From voices than this tumult nobler far,
From poet proffering me still his flowers,
From sages who, no lower than the star
Bid me to look, shouting from rival towers.

From this I turn, perplex'd, and blind, and deaf,
To where the Present has subdued its strain,

To where Life is as Death—to where the sheaf
Is housed, and idle are Time's hands—to
Spain!

Land of the river of the golden sands!
Thy glories, like that gold, but fable seem;
Past is the sceptre from thy sunburnt hands,
Lost from thy dark eyes their imperial gleam!

Land whence went forth, the one like lightning
hurl'd,
The other free as wind upon the seas,
The soldier and the sailor of the world,
The Carthaginian and the Genoese!

Where the swart Spaniard to the swarthier Moor
Brook'd not to yield on many a battle plain;
Gone is the Paynim—does his rival, o'er
Ocean and earth who domineer'd, remain?

Land opulent in fable, echoing aye
The horn that sounded through wild Roncesvalles!
Where still the strength of Hercules its way
Seemeth to cleave through Calpe's high sea-wall!

Land of Cervantes! who right fitly seems
Thy jester with his melancholy mirth;—
Land sainted still with what Murillo's dreams
Drew down from heaven and lifted up from earth!

It is not that thou livest, and hast lost
The nature and the art that made thee fair;—
The flower still of thy year knows never frost,
Still fragrance steeps thy Andalusian air.

Thy Seville, Venus of earth's cities, yet
Rises from out her sea of golden bowers;

Still, when in heaven the red and blue are met,
Glitters Toledo of the hundred towers.

The sweetness is not taken with thy breath,
Thy golden forests yet link sea and sea,
As with some beauteous queen, laid out in death,
Wearing her splendours, so it is with thee.

Thy ships still sail, thy grapes grow, in the sun,
Purple, as still is waved thy daughters' hair;
Thy muleteers sing, thy dances are not done :—
But life has hope, and thou hast but despair.

Yet, as when a man's dust is dropp'd down deep,
And cover'd, somewhat sorrow is redress'd,
To think, as our eyes follow, that in sleep
Which wakes not with earth's morn, there may be rest.

So might one muse, and listening to the war
Of winds on that Sierra where Spain's kings
Lie, would betwixt Granada and Navarre
See but the shadow the Escurial flings.

ELTER WATER.

THE light clouds drift above thee,
The woods, as if they love thee,
Are whispering around;
The Greek who there had sought her,
Had found in Elter Water
The Naiad, lily-crown'd.

The white and happy village!
The slopes of flowery pillage
For bees, the stream and isles!—
I think the lake is fairest
When tempest-rain is rarest,
When Summer is all smiles.

But when the mists veil Nature,
And seems the mountain stature,
Above thee towering, higher;

I, with a lover's duty,
Thy passionate dark beauty,
Still gaze on, and admire.

Yet wish the mist-sent blindness
May leave my sight, and kindness
To thy fair face return;
O! to thy eyes, my Naiad,
Heaven's lapis lazuli add,
And smiling hold thy urn.

THE BULL AT BALA.

THE peak of Arran on the left!
Hard on the right the rocks shoot down
To where, along their side, is cleft
The mountain road to Bala town.

The road o'erhangs the vale and falls,
By many a wild and winding way,
To vast and various view that palls
Not through the lapse of Summer's day.

The billowy mountains blue afar!
Some giant sculptor's fancy warm,
You'd think, had watch'd the ocean's war,
And carved the statue of a storm.

The lake of Bala, and the rills
That in it lose their mountain glee,
And westward, towering o'er the hills,
The throne whence Idris sees the sea!

A glorious scene you might mistake
For Paradise!—its Eve was there;
Than garden rose glass'd in the lake,
Than hyacinth on the hills, more fair.

The Bull at Bala was her home,
She made appear, behind the bar,
The porter's froth as nectar's foam,
And flavour'd e'en the cheap cigar.

Nor did I, gazing, wonder much
That hers was still a maiden's grace,
She seem'd a radiant Hebe, such
Would choose no mate of mortal race.

The rustic Welshman, amorous,
Drank hard, his spirit high to strain,
And often dared, encouraged thus,
To vow, but ever vow'd in vain.

"Her eyes but useless arrows shoot;
She seeks," said Malice, "to ensnare
Some youth of light preposterous suit,
Short pipe, and all the tourist air."

But these, they flung their knapsacks down,
And stay'd to flirt an hour or so,
Then pass'd away from Bala town,
Like winds that kiss the rose and go.

* * * * *

I came and went, a year rolled round,
I, wandering down that vale once more,
Took at the Bull mine ease, but found
No lovely barmaid as of yore.

I ask'd the waiter, "Is she wed,
This girl for whom e'en gods might pine?"
"She married, sir," the waiter said,
"A gent in the commercial line."

* * * * *

I heard,—my eye in London soon
Gave contradiction to my ear;
For I one summer afternoon
Down Rotten Row my steps did steer.

Tired I sat down, and ever on
Flow'd past me Fashion's rising tide,
Until a whisper fell upon
Me musing, murmur'd down the Ride.

"'Tis she,"—I look'd, a sudden thrill!
The place, the time, appear'd a dream;
Back flash'd the climbing of the hill,
The fishing, futile, in the stream.

For here, the while her fair cheek glow'd,
Such gaze from that gay throng to win,
A Duke beside her bridle—rode
The lowly maid of Bala's inn.

Both low and high, and near and far,
This duke had sought, without avail,
A duchess; yet star after star
Drew ducal sunshine but to pale.

He long'd than languid city maid
To pluck some blossom freshlier blown,
But found the girls of glen and glade
Knew nought of life beyond their own.

At last, in bagsman's guise and gig,
The eccentric noble drove away;
He took the name of Mr. Higg,
And spent in search a year and day.

Until in Bala's town, a place
Wild, yet where tourists' wheels are whirl'd,
He found a bride of rural grace,
Combined with knowledge of the world.

VIOLET.

"NAY, Violet, 'twere foolish freak
To change thy name, ma belle,
Which, when its music sweet I speak,
Doth aye my thraldom tell
To the dark eyes and pearly cheek
That fit that name so well."

She answer'd very wearily:—
All round, in sunset-swoon,
Lay richly tranced, as on the sea
Sank the last sun of June,
Bequeathing to each orange-tree
Rathe relics of his noon.

" My name," she said, " I would forget,
Alas! I grew as grows
The flower which is my namesake, yet
The last heaven's dew to lose;
The dew best loves the *violet:*
The rifler bee the *rose:*

" Ah me! the rover lingereth,
Yet, well I know, anon
Comes hint of some new odorous breath
The west wind's wings upon,
And leaves me to a lonely death
Ere many suns have shone."

Past her, with step which is a dance,
The southern summer reels;
Right through the heart of her romance
Death's darkling stroke she feels,
And turns despair to dalliance,
Nor, save for kisses, kneels.

" Oh clasp me closer, murmuring
'My Rose;' like fiery wine
I drink thy love, while, vanishing
Down vistas of the vine,
Fades the pure floweret of the spring,
Whose name no more be mine!"

THE HEBRIDES.

I AM smitten, I am smitten, and the song
Is dumb upon my lips,
Nor can soar upon a pinion strong
To the clouds, above the ships;
It is daunted, as a halcyon here might be,
Although upon a tranquil sea;
It is daunted, where the Summer faintly smiles,
Drops few flowers in the depth of the defiles,
While the hills forget the wind, and the sea forgives the Isles.

Towards the sea from as barren hills I gaze,
And an awe my spirit takes:
With what power weak man to amaze
Come the mountains and the lakes

Upon me! comes the far stretch'd-out sea,
The most silent home of things most free,
And the rocks o'er whose platforms wind the miles,
And the tarns dark beneath savage piles,
And, betwixt the foamless friths, the blue and
stilly Isles!

The gull calls hoarsely for its prey
About me; can it dare
Even as much as flap its wings on its way
Through so voiceless a vast air?
Yes! it only thinks for its food,
And is like to the islesman rude,
Whose soul with its fog ever foils
Sun and lightning; who in squalor aye toils,
Nor looketh above his peat to eagles of the Isles.

Too weak he is for scenes like this,
Nor for laughter made, nor tears,

Where no part is as strange as Love's kiss
Of all the seventy years.
Faint is Summer, pale her love, the Sun;
Here thunder and music are as one,
When the cloud meets the wave on the kyles,
And it seems as though the rocks would be spoils
Of the storm, when wild Death pours his vial on
the Isles.

But not more I seek the fruit of stormy waves
Than that of sunny leas,
I, one of summer pilgrims who stay staves
'Mid the iron-blue Hebrides,
And gaze, while the loneliness brings awe,
On the ocean-glass which only wings flaw,
When the sea-bird whom the pale Sun beguiles,
While no spray from his rocky nest recoils,
Riots seaward fast and far, and leaves the lifeless
Isles.

ST. BRIAVELS.

WHEN the weary, hateful town,
And the wheels round me for miles,
And the hastening up and down
Of the base whom gain beguiles;
And the roar of rushing trade,
And the smoke that is its breath,
And its insolence, have made
My soul faint, nigh unto death—
Times have been when a mere name
To my soul with solace came;
And that name that, like church bells
Now and then heard, with me dwells,
Is thy name, St. Briavels.

Little town, near to the Wye,
Though I know of thee no more,

I desire not ere I die
Thee to visit and explore;
For, O village of the saint,
Thou it may be dost not claim
Aught of dreamy, sweet, or quaint,
Save by music of thy name:
Folly 'tis, and 'twill be harm
Sifting such a vague sweet charm;
So I will not risk the spells
Which might break, my soul foretells,
If I saw St. Briavels.

Yet it must be fair, thy site,
'Mid few men and many flowers;
Far away from city's blight,
One could dream away the hours,
Gazing on thy bowery plains
And blue border-heights, nor tire
Of the orchards, and hill-chains,
And the quiet western shire.

Lovers in thee should be blest,
And thy weary ones have rest;
Lightly should their last two ells
Lie of earth on those whose knells
Rung are at St. Briavels.

Though, with time, our hate grows cold,
And our love might ne'er have been;
Yet sometimes our memories hold
Faces we but once have seen.
—Place and face have difference none,
Towns there are my memories tread
Never now, where years agone
I had scarce erred, blindfolded;—
These,—their names with death have part,
Thine,—but once seen on a chart,—
Lives, nor time's aye-flowing wells
Drown the dream that still compels
Thought of thee, St. Briavels.

"ONLY A WOMAN'S HAIR."

"ONLY a woman's hair!"—
Well, once, I will confess,
Not all the wealth of a millionnaire
Could have won from me this tress.

It was won—ay, when was it won?—
In the days of long ago,
And of all strange places under the sun,—
At an agricultural show!

We were gazing, arm in arm,
In a study of love's bright brown,
At a pair of pigeons;—a sudden alarm,
Her hair was coming down!

We gain'd an ante-room;
Scarce had I closed the door;
When it fell, in masses of glossy gloom,
That half way reach'd the floor.

A rosy torch of June
Was her face, as she hurriedly bound
The dishevell'd strays that her beauty's noon
With wandering arms enwound.

And I ask'd—ere a day's escape
Came a scented note and my suit—
" From those rich, ripe clusters one tiny grape
Is not forbidden fruit?"

* * * * *

I " assisted "—('tis Virgil's term)—
Last week at the very same show,
As a partner in the implement firm
Of Mangel, Wurzel, and Co.

And I saw Mrs. Tomkinson,
With ten darlings little and big,
A stoutish lady, intent upon
A remarkably fine prize pig.

I thought of the sweet lang syne,
And I dare say so did she;
But I merely remark'd that the day was fine,
And ask'd after Mr. T.

Here, Thomas, pull off this boot,
And fling that rubbish—no, stay!
Tho' Time has taken my hair for his loot,
And her glossy tresses are grey:

Yet *this* lock never grows sere,
I gaze, and she shines again,
The star of my youth's most golden year,
And not the mother of ten!

RYDALMERE.

THINE are no waters wide or wild,
No legend of past smiles or sighs,
No circle to the eye up-piled
Of hills o'er hills that rise.

Yet chose the thoughtfullest great soul
That e'er to verse his spirit gave,
To dwell betwixt thy mighty knoll
And wood-reflecting wave.

And with thy woods, within thy breast,
His quiet memory seems to brood;
Thou little lake, the quietest
Of the fair sisterhood!

THE COLLEGE TUTOR.

YES! Life was like the Morning in her bloom,
That grows as from high hills she hasteneth down;
Nor knew the Queen of sorrows, Memory, whom
The ashen grey years crown;

Nor that the power was transient of the smiles
Of the fair rival queen, Euphrosyne,
As morning's gift of sheen to the cloud-isles
Which float in Heaven's blue sea.

Golden the legend was of life, unread
In the bright scroll the dark page of the grave,
What time my careless student-days were sped
Where willow stoops to wave.

The days when love was hope! where first the
spires—
Crowning fair Learning's garden still in bud—
Flash on the stranger in the sun's low fires,
Her father's cottage stood.

Oh! my soul's life that was one long, sweet sigh,
Well I recall it, though some hairs are grey,
Well we recall the years, Pauline and I,
When every month was May.

Yes! I remember thy fond bosom's pant,
Seems thy young bloom to touch my shoulder
still,
When what I urged thy pride refused to grant
Against my parents' will.

And many a year has fled, nor brought me change
Of place—I kneel in the same hall of prayer,
My feet beside the same slow river range,
Climb the same College stair.

Yet change is mine; more than when day to
night
Turns, as by magic, on the tropic wave,
Which was, one moment, as the throne of light,
And is, the next, its grave.

Or when the love of passion (not like ours
Whose bloom sweet Heaven makes fadeless, spite
of fate)
Shows, in a trice, the poison of its flowers,
And dies—to live as hate.

Or when the mist on mountains, sudden-rent,
Turns the blank tracts, as fast away it trails,
Into the brows of giants, imminent
O'er emeraldine vales.

Or when the Eastern Caliph and his love
Reach'd the dim halls at last of their desire,
Nor had their prize, but sentence aye to rove
With hands on hearts of fire.

Greater my gradual change than these; the
dreams
Are gone that made me as a god at times,
As hammer sounding upon metal seems
The ringing of life's chimes.

Scarce the most restless, whom no land or tide
Knows not, have, with the years, forgotten more
Than I, the lonely scholar who abide
'Mid willows, and with lore.

Springs turn the earth to flowers, to song the
grove,
Transform to blue and white the weather grey,
Yet listless is my soul to sweetness of
Violet, to bird's virelay.

But one thing have I of the old far years,
One bridge my autumn and my spring between;
A bridge of sighs, to thee I think of tears,
Our hopeless love, Pauline.

Thus live we, you and I, a league us parts,
And to the cottage of my faded flower
Sometimes I fare, and there our broken hearts
We bind up for an hour.

Walking with steps that once more lightly met,
Or talking by your father's fireside blaze,
We, to whom life has only given regret,
And length of sober days.

In thy locks and in mine grey strands there are,
Yet thy thinn'd tresses tie me to the spot
Where once their affluence hid my shoulder,—ah!
Those hours are unforgot!

WITH lips too happy for laughter,
Songs sweeter than sirens sing,
And winds that soften'd to waft her,
And violet eyes, came Spring.

"O Summer, Summer, Summer!"
I cried when the spring was gone,
My cry for the next newcomer
Was vain, and the days went on.

She came, indeed, but I knew not;
She went, and I waited, till
The bud should bloom, but it blew not,
The music should sound, it was still.

A wan ghost stood beside me
At last, after many days,
Tear-fill'd were her eyes that eyed me,
Her voice had no lilt of lays.

The wreath she wore nigh mask'd her,
With its falling leaves. "Art thou
The ghost of Spring?" I ask'd her,
"Or is Autumn with me now?"

"But they sing that the spirit dances
Of Autumn, uplift with wine,
That earth guards her with golden lances,
While she keeps state under the vine."

"Nay," she answer'd, "thy life rolls onward,
It is better to grieve than forget,
Through tears must men gaze sunward,
Give thanks for my gift, regret.

" Thine heart is no rocky splinter,
Thy soul has not lost its wing,
Who has memory of spring in winter,
Has hope of an endless spring."

LORTON VALE.

MY wandering steps went where,
'Mid hills the clouds that scale,
I met a maiden fair
In Lorton Vale,

And pass'd upon my path,
Through such a mist as fills
Full oft that valley's strath,
And hides the hills.

I saw the fields hard by,
And through the vapour peer'd
Glimpses of hill-sides nigh,
Vast, grey, and weird.

Elsewhere the mist hid all,
I traced a rook's near flight,
But only by its call,
Hoarse in the height.

The springs of Nature's grace
To my eyes' thirst were seal'd;
I saw no stream's white race,
No fern that reel'd,

Swept by the mountain breeze,
Nor the long bowery lea,
Nor the high hill-ash trees,
Nor the far sea.

Yet, if that girl made stir
My heart where mists did sail,
It was from meeting her
In Lorton Vale!

The hazard of the world,
  The triumph of the hour,
Fortune upon me hurl'd
  In Danae shower,—

Seem'd falsest spells which Love
  With one brief flash made fail,
Because *his* charm was wove
  In Lorton Vale.

Yet Lorton Vale around,
  (Shepherds have never driven
Flocks o'er a fairer ground),
  Was hid, as Heaven.

Is glory made by gloom
  More glorious?—He whose mind
Recover'd Eden's bloom
  In verse, was blind.

If the wide mist, to please
My eyes, itself had rent,
Till they, like Lorton bees,
With sweets were spent;

If I had view'd the heights
Where lingers day's last fire,
Where wildly the wind smites
His loudest lyre;

If, clear, the valley's sheet
Had stretch'd from peak to shore
Its league of flocks that bleat
And bees that soar;

If not a rood between
The eagle and the sail,
Had from me hidden been
In Lorton Vale;

If the last misty wreath
  Had trail'd up, and away;
Should I have drawn my breath
  In Heaven that day?

Would the loud world have seem'd
  As a forgotten tale,
While I so sweetly dream'd
  In Lorton Vale?

* * * * *

I know but this—my soul
  Was painter to my eyes,
The mist hid not a knoll
  Of Paradise.

For plain and mountain slope
  Were lit, not from earth's sky,
With a strange light—of Hope
  Or Memory.

And in it I saw Love,
A vision pure and pale,
A flower that only throve
In Lorton Vale.

THE STOUT CRICKETER.

NOT of that sort is he
Which lounges by the tents to kill
The time with levity;
Nor loudly boastful of his skill
Telling how, (in a match you didn't see,)
He drove a slow for six, or smote to leg
A four, or cut a three,
Or over a tent-peg
Tumbled, but made his catch;—not boastful thus
Is the STOUT CRICKETER, nor frivolous.

Yet you may see him smile
At his own joke, may hear him air his wits
Most pointlessly and slowly, while
Heavily on a bench he sits

Smoking a pipe, and with a critic's gaze
Upon the younger batsmen of his side,
Recalls old cricket memories from the haze
Of time, not loudly to deride
But calmly to disparage the wild play
"Which, sir, the youngsters of the present day—"

"Smith!" "where's old Smith?" "now Smith!"
For innings Smith doth boune;
In waistcoat black and beltless trousers, with
His braces not let down,
He, walking stumpwards, doth the lean earth lard;
His gloves, or, as he funnily calls them, "mits,"
Are button'd by the umpire, he takes guard,
Most likely on his bat then gravely spits,
Plays the first balls with not untroubled mien,
But somehow scrapes a score up, say fifteen.

He bowls—swift underhand,
And has been seen to previously apply—

As though he some mysterious magic plann'd—
The ball unto his eye.
A smile, yea, e'en a chuckle from him breaks,
When with a lucky length he floors the stumps;
Off then his hat, his head to rub, he takes,
Shows how he pitch'd the ball where the ground bumps;
But piteous looks, and stolidly perplex'd,
If his "best pitch" "just suits" the man who comes in next.

At dinner he is great,
Drinks beer and sherry, pays for a friend's wine;
Grows genial, and proceeds to state
"He ne'er yet saw a ball so fine
As that which bowl'd him;" liberal then
He "stands" the umpire's dinner, nor yet stays
His generous hand, but for four seedy men,
Who somehow claim a dinner, next he pays.

These losels help him, struggling, to get peel'd,
When he, alack! must after dinner field.

Sometimes on tented plain,
The only veteran there,
I have seen him, running, mirthful plaudits gain
From athlete youth, or girl-spectators fair;
And I have pitied him as seeming strange,
Misplaced among the rest, to him mere boys,
And fear'd his memories might sadly range
Back to fled youth and unreturning joys;
But these fine fancies don't, I think, occur
To my respectable Stout Cricketer.

THE WEST TO THE EAST.

THE hyacinths upon my hills!
You vow'd me like them purely free;
My vales the pride of lilies fills,
Such pride you turn'd to love in me;
You kiss'd and went, from fresh and fair
I faded, and the rustic squires repair
To shrines more kind than mine to a less stammer'd
prayer.

Too high it tower'd, and fell, the pride,
Which should but point to Heaven's high
dome;
Now village children haunt my side,
My mountain valley seems my home,

And Time has still'd the secret sigh,
Replaced those grey far flats once brought so
nigh,
And made appear a dream your love which was
a lie.

PROSERPINE.

SHE sitteth, sullen-seeming, for her lips
Are sweet, yet smile not, gay was once their smile
And careless where the bee still sips
Crocus, in Sicily's isle.

Where Enna's summer-silence driven by mirth
Of her and her flower-finding peers away,
Return'd, when suddenly up from earth,
Scattering the flowers as spray,

The lord of Hades leapt on his black steeds,
And dark as tempest, swift as its fierce flame,
Towards Proserpine, along the meads,
The rushing chariot came.

Whereat, recovering breath, those girls let fall
Their flower-baskets, and fled shrieking o'er
Their vale of wandering festival,
Hell's flower-hidden door.

And light white feet of some bled o'er the hills
Against the sharp stones, fleeing up to where
Fern-forests hide the racing rills,
And clouds as gauze seem rare.

And some by lily-paven pools below—
With speed such as saved Daphne o'er the sod
From him who had dropp'd his golden bow—
Escaped the sterner god.

But taking heart, as by no chase beset,
The climbers turn'd, and left the slopes of shale
Above them, and their fellows met,
Now rallying in the vale.

And all sought Proserpine, the sole one miss'd,
Calling out " Proserpine! Proserpine!"—in vain;—
They shall haunt Enna when they list,
But *she*, ah, ne'er again!

Whom, torn from summer and its arch of vair,
Dim Desolation girds, Night overwhelms,—
Where fire takes place of flowers, there
Her state is, and her realms.

She in that land where earth's night were as morn,
Sits in severity without relief,
Far from the first green mist of corn,
And the last golden sheaf,

Far from where summer covers happy men
Ever with drifting white and steadfast blue,
Far from eve's hour most heavenly, when
Love to its tryst is true.

Far from the wondering child and trembling bride,
From grey hairs honour'd by surrounding breath,
From sweet things smiled and sweeter sigh'd,
From life far;—and from death.

Far from the countless, restless, human bees,
Far from the many, far too from the one,
From weary wandering Hercules,
And falling Phaethon.

From foes remember'd and forgotten friends,
From the fierce birth and faint death of desire,
From summer's golden dream that ends
Always in cloud and fire.

From those who pray for peace and have it not,
From those who whet their swords still for
the wars,
From all the mystery of the lot
Cast betwixt sea and stars.

Remote from these, no more she gives redress
To pluck'd flowers, wreathing them her brows to bind,
Her shadowy hair and motionless
Forgets the sun and wind.

Day from her eyes and laughter from her ears,
And music's memory from her soul, have gone;
One darkness-piercing sound she hears,
The roar of Acheron

Ravening around!—her lord she scarcely owns,
Lurid beside her; silence is between
The ebon everlasting thrones
Of Hades' king and queen.

Only sometimes she lifts the glooms that lash
Her lids, and fondly turns to him her eyes;
The intervals betwixt each flash
Of love, are centuries.

* * * * *

Not alone she in Sicily did resign
Speed of the hours and youth's sweet dream
and gay,
Here where the world lost Proserpine,
It lost Rosalia.

Who, in the midmost laughter of her morn,
When every lute in all the land was her's,
Of her bright beauty made forlorn
The amorous islanders.

A nunnery seal'd that fountain which the dance
Once would let loose to shame the sun's full
blaze,
And turn'd the song and quick shy glance
To hymn and upward gaze.

And on that isle, while light and shade fleck even
To the blue tideless waves, its asphodel,
Fame shall bestow the bride of Heaven,
Fable the queen of Hell.

IN THE LAND OF WORDSWORTH.

YES! I remember,—fix'd, as fate;
Treasured, as long-kept tress or glove;
Sweet, as revenge; and passionate,
Yet pure, as truest love;
Dear, as a bride;—stays with me, and shall stay,
The memory of one world-obliterating day!

Valleys in which the wind was dead,
Hills on which it to death was nigh;
—As underfoot, so overhead,
The triumph of July!

Which heaven with universal blue confess'd,
And hill with streamless flank, and lake with
azure rest.

The banners of the clouds were furl'd
And stored away, such heat as stills
The singing birds, oppress'd the world
Of long vales and high hills;
No sound save of the bee, I, free from men,
Heard, drinking summer's wine in a gorse-
cushion'd glen.

Nature, who only seems a name
To most of those who come and go,
While she remains and is the same,
Nor bodily change doth know,
Now tempest-cloak'd, now dight with star-wreath
drawn
Off, when her deep dark hair grows golden with
the dawn:—

She who has voices many, and all
  Music to the attunèd ear,
From thunder to the winds that call
  The spring forth; she drew near,
Splendid, with silent-fervent lips, and smiled,
And took me in her arms, as mother takes a
    child.

She, the great mother, Nature! veil'd,
  —But I was given her face to see,
And something with her breath inhaled
  Of immortality,
Or did I dream?—while the long summer day
Shadowless, windless, bright, pass'd, like an hour,
    away.

Standing above quaint Hawkshead town,
  And Esthwaite's lake of flawless glass,
On the long valley looking down
  From high heath-purpled grass;

More sweetness than the bee there ever sips,
I, hanging on them, heard from those immortal
lips.

Such sweetness was it to my drouth
As of the stream where Memory dies.—
Said I, I hung upon her mouth?
Rather, I read her eyes,
For she being silent that day near the lake,
By splendour and by heat—yea, by her silence—
spake.

"I alone stay 'twixt sea and sky,"
(The speech of her deep eyes ran thus,)
"Mine is all visible victory
O'er the victorious,
For I, I only stand before the breath,
That all things else lays low, of devastating
Death.

" I only on the sea of Time,
Of which the billows are the years,
Sail without wreck—I am sublime
O'er laughter and o'er tears,
For my wrath is not men's wrath, nor with them
Rejoice I, when shines forth the sun, my diadem.

" Beauty, the red rose, not at war
With Innocence the white, and Truth
Amidst them,—these three sisters are
Of my unfading youth;
But not my kin are those, the still-miss'd scope
Of amorous hearts of men,—sad Memory and glad Hope.

" My son! I lift thee in mine arms,
For thee my soul's Æolian strings
I strike, away the music charms
Men's discords—as on wings

I bid thee soar and give thee Lethe, wet,
Aye, on my lips, that thou the mean world mayst
forget."

With this she stoop'd, but ere she reach'd
My mouth, the fantasy was gone;
Though still the blue day, cloud-unbleach'd,
With halcyon wings flew on,
But purpler hills, and air that ceased to burn,
Told that the light now flow'd from a nigh empty
urn.

The solemn evening, with its bloom,
Came, kind to labour and to love,
Flushing Helvellyn's topmost coomb
High the great hills above;
Thus for me, rapt betwixt the heights and
bowers,
Ended that lapse serene of memorable hours.

Ended, and left me of my lot
  Weary, and of blind man's desire,—
To those who conquer envying not
  The laurel and the lyre,
But to the hill-moths brown, their fate,—to
    wing
Life's flutter all away on these red lawns of
    ling.

THE END.

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